

Is Hypnotherapy the way for you to finally stop smoking?

The phone rings and a voice on the other end says "Oh I am interested in Hypnotherapy, can you make me stop smoking" I reply that I am sorry but I can't make you do anything. They sound disappointed, but usually brighten up when I tell them that I can help them stop if that's what they want.

It is hardly surprising that I have this conversation so often, there is so much misinformation out there about hypnotherapy and the whole process of kicking "the habit". In this article I want to set the record straight. I know from my own practise that hypnotherapy can help most people stop smoking usually with just one session. Quitting doesn't have to be hard or a struggle, it can be very comfortable! In my experience the main thing that determines success is motivation. Hypnotherapy can only help if you really want to stop.

I want to explain and explore 3 things:

1. What hypnotherapy is
 2. The nature of the problem i.e. quitting
 3. How and why it can be so extraordinarily effective for stopping you smoking.
- There is good evidence for the effectiveness of Hypnotherapy with regard to smoking cessation. For example, the respected scientific publication 'New Scientist', reported hypnosis to be the most effective way to give up smoking¹.

In fact the Advertising Standards Agency has approved the following text as factually accurate and not misleading:

Research comparing many different studies of hypnotherapy has shown that on average smokers are over five times more likely to break the habit with hypnosis than by willpower alone. Hypnotherapy in general is also proven to be more than twice as effective compared with nicotine patches. If you really want to stop smoking then one session could be all you need.

Getting help to stop smoking with hypnotherapy / hypnosis, was found to be 300% as successful as nicotine replacement therapy, and 500% as successful as just will power alone¹.

Why is it so hard to stop smoking?

Well for one thing almost everybody you meet tells you it is going to be really tough. The public health adverts tell you the same "don't give up giving up" implies that it is normal to fail. If all you are using is willpower this is true, even if you find nicotine replacement useful, you are still trying to break a habit with a conscious decision. That doesn't work very well; if knowing that stopping smoking is a good idea was going to stop you it would have done so by now! If being afraid of dying from a smoking related disease was going to stop you again it would have done so by now.

What we need for any process of habit change is what I call an integrated decision. What I mean by this is that very often someone does really want to give up smoking and they can't understand why, despite this genuine desire they fail! Well, we are not all of a piece, when the part that wants to give up tries to take control, the part that is worried about putting on weight or not being able to go to the pub cuts in and

¹ The study from the University of Iowa used a meta-analysis, utilising the results of more than 600 studies totalling nearly 72,000 people. The results, which were published in the Journal of Applied Psychology and included 48 studies of hypnosis covering 6000 smokers, clearly showed that hypnosis, to use the same terminology as the quit counsellor, was three times more effective than NRT.¹

sabotages the decision. Hypnotherapy helps us to overcome this, often in just one session. This means that we make a decision that we feel good about, feel certain about, and that will carry through. Most people's experience is that they don't really notice themselves making an effort to give up they just do!

What is Hypnotherapy?

Hypnotherapy is a powerful natural and safe state of directed awareness. It is a way of helping people to communicate simply and directly with their own unconscious mind. It cannot be emphasised enough that the person being hypnotised is always aware of what is happening to them and is in complete control at all times. It is one of the fundamental principles of Hypnosis that you can't get people to do things they don't want to do or things that go against their fundamental moral code.

What most people experience is a relaxed pleasant state something like daydreaming where the therapists' voice guides them to utilise their own resources to achieve their goals. We experience 'trance' states all the time in our daily life, if you have ever driven somewhere and not really noticed yourself driving, that's an example of a natural 'trance' or likewise if you have ever been so engrossed in a book that you were reading that you didn't hear someone speaking to you!

Hypnotherapy is a two way process in which the client sets the goals and outcomes and the therapist helps them access their own inner resources to achieve them. What makes hypnotherapy so effective for stopping smoking?

Hypnotherapy helps us change two very important things. Firstly it lets us address the habit of smoking. Smoking becomes so much a part of our everyday life. It becomes connected to things like relaxing, eating or driving, so much so that it simply doesn't feel right if you don't have a cigarette. The same can be true for so many aspects of our daily life, from having a drink, eating or driving. Secondly nicotine is highly addictive and stimulates the brains primary reward pathway. Both of these problems can be addressed through Hypnotherapy. The unconscious mind can instruct the brain to effectively filter out cravings for cigarettes.

If the process is done properly this will target specific situations that may be stress points for you, e.g. with friend, or your first cup of coffee of the day. The unconscious mind is also what controls our habits, so we can use hypnosis to reprogram our habits much more effectively than the conscious mind.

When we are in hypnosis that analytical voice that says "you won't be able to do this" or something similar is quiet, so that these new ideas can become a vivid part of our inner world. At the end of the session we will have installed an internal representation of life without cigarettes that will be attractive:

- no cravings
- feeling fitter
- enjoying your food more
- not overeating
- able to socialise with people who still smoke
- more money
- better health
- more self control!
- No substitution of food or anything else

If you have been thinking about giving up, I am willing to bet you have been thinking in terms of sacrifice and struggle! No wonder your unconscious mind doesn't want to go ahead. Once you have a clear internal picture of a positive and happy life without cigarettes that feels believable you can make the decision on an emotional level.

What can I expect?

It is important that any hypnotherapy is designed to address the specific needs of the individual and this is especially so when helping you to stop smoking. Different people can enter trance in different ways, and it is important to find the way that works best for the individual. Hypnotherapy is something you do with someone not to someone. I always spend a large part of the initial session listening to my client so that I can respond to their concerns and on the basis of this we can then agree whether a preparatory session, followed by another highly targeted one (this works best for 90% of the people I see), or a slightly longer series of sessions will be most effective.

The procedure of Hypnotherapy is very straight forward. The first part of the session will be spent gathering information or reviewing progress. The Hypnosis session itself will consist of being guided by the hypnotherapist's voice to enter a very comfortable and relaxed state a bit like a daydream. You will always be in control and will probably be fully aware of everything that is being said. I like many other Hypnotherapists will give you a self hypnosis C.D to listen to as a booster. Almost without exception people report feeling relaxed and refreshed when the session ends. You will be wide awake and well able to drive, or go to work or back to school or whatever comes next in your day!

Bill Hard runs South Cotswolds Hypnotherapy in Oxfordshire. He is a qualified and internationally registered practising Hypnotherapist and a Certified NLP practitioner, a member of the National Council for Hypnotherapy in the UK and a member of the National Guild of Hypnotists in America (NGH); (the largest and oldest hypnosis organisation in the world). He is also a Board Certified hypnotherapist and a certified instructor of hypnotherapy, a trainer for The UK Academy of Therapeutic Arts and Sciences (incorporating the Washington School of Clinical and Advanced Hypnosis) . For more information please go to www.southcotswoldshypnos.co.uk or email bill@southcotswoldshypnos.co.uk